Nathaniel Hawthorne's The Scarlet Letter:

The Art of Naming and the Structuring of Meaning

An Honor's Thesis (HONRS 499)

by

Jonathan P. Feller

Dr. Donald Gilman, Advisor

Donald Gilman

Ball State University

Muncie, Indiana

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Abstract

Nathaniel Hawthorne's The Scarlet Letter (1852) is a meticulously constructed novel that utilizes many thematic and literary devices to deepen its meaning and enrich its text. One method, which Hawthorne employs to enhance his novel, is onomastics. Onomastics is the study of the origin and forms of names. The novel also forms a framework that derives from formation and use of words that relate to its thematic structuring. By using characters' names that contain meanings beyond their literal significance, Hawthorne enriches the characters' personalities and actions, as well as the novel's complex artistry.

Introduction

Nathaniel Hawthorne's The Scarlet Letter is a brilliantly crafted American novel that has become widely studied and criticized. In constructing the novel, Hawthorne employed many literary devices to enhance various aspects of the text. One important, but often under scrutinized device, is onomastics, or the study of the origin and forms of names that structure the themes and form of this novel. Hawthorne uses this technique to bring greater depth to his characters and plot.

At first glance, a reader of The Scarlet Letter might believe the names Hawthorne used were selected at random. However, with careful analysis of other sources, the reader will find Hawthorne's choice of names revealing as they relate to the characters and text as a whole. Names, coupled with their intertextual meanings, allow the reader to find parallels, allusions, and historicity, which enrich the text of The Scarlet Letter. Through Hawthorne's use of the multiple meanings inherent in his art of naming, characters in the text are given richer personas, while important relationships and scenes gain greater magnitude.

Not all names' meanings and purposes in The Scarlet Letter are readily apparent. Some are subtle and require reflective thought; others are more obvious and require little contemplation. In writing this paper, the author hopes to illustrate both the obvious and the understated uses of names, as well as present new applications as they apply to the text.

Failure to find a comprehensive source for onomastic study of Hawthorne's The Scarlet Letter has fueled the development of this work. A work, such as Kory Watson's

"A Dictionary of Biblical Allusions in The Scarlet Letter," adequately catalogs many of Hawthorne's biblical references but fails to sufficiently contextualize them. Similarly, Charles Ryskamp's "The New England Sources of The Scarlet Letter" serves to specify the historical nature of some of Hawthorne's characters but not others. Metaphorical meanings are acknowledged but are often overlooked in favor of writing about more grand topics. Lastly, no person seems to have recognized the significance of Arthurian legend in shaping the character of Arthur Dimmesdale. In this work, the author hopes to contextualize Hawthorne's use of names and their importance in illuminating his novel with both previously established thoughts, as well as new ones.

The paper will examine Hawthorne's use of onomastics in The Scarlet Letter by separating it into four categories that will progress from the most tangible to the most abstract. The first section will deal with the historical use of onomastics in the text. The second segment will deal with biblical implications within the novel. The third part of the work will examine the use of Arthurian legend in Hawthorne's selection of names. Lastly, the work will scrutinize the use of metaphorical ideas used in constructing The Scarlet Letter.

This work should prove to be a useful tool in both understanding Hawthorne's use of onomastics in developing his characters and in gaining a deeper understanding and appreciation of his meticulous plot construction. It should also prove to be a useful companion for readers of The Scarlet Letter.

This work aims to explain Hawthorne's use of onomastics. Inevitably, it will fall short of completion and perfection. Additional or alternate critical considerations could account for Hawthorne's selection of names in the text and prove equally reasonable.

However, this work's purpose is not solely to explain onomastics in The Scarlet Letter. It aims to spark greater interest, appreciation, and research into a classic, American novel. Furthermore, it intends to develop interest in the other classic works, time periods, people, and ideas that are referenced.

Chapter I: The Historical Framework

Of the four onomastic devices Hawthorne employs, the historical aspect is the most concrete. Hawthorne's use of historical people and places creates a tangible world for the novel to take place in. It also allows Hawthorne to give the story a facade of factuality. In examining The Scarlet Letter's use of historical names, the novel is given a time frame and sense of reality. Yet, it also reveals much about Hawthorne, which also allows the reader to gain a greater understanding of the writer and his motivation for crafting the novel.

The first historical name that is used in The Scarlet Letter is that of the town of Salem, Massachusetts. It is the location of the Custom House, the home of Hawthorne and his ancestors, and the town in which the author discovers the "story" of The Scarlet Letter. Still, using Salem serves more important purposes. Salem's history comes to shape much of the narrative tone of The Scarlet Letter. Additionally, as home to Hawthorne and his ancestors, Salem serves to more intimately connect him with the story and its intended direction.

Historically, the town of Salem is known for one event above all else – the Salem Witch Trials. The Salem Witch Trials took place in 1692 and have been the subject of much scrutiny. Other witch trials took place throughout the world, but none resulted in the level of hysteria and persecution that occurred in Salem.

Puritans were a superstitious people. They believed only God's grace kept citizens from turning to witchcraft and other devil's work (Johnson 117). Basically, people had a natural tendency to gravitate towards evil. Additionally, they believed that

the devil worked most aggressively where he was most dreaded (Johnson 118). Because the people of Salem thought of themselves as righteous, God-fearing people, they viewed themselves as prime targets of the devil. It was partly under these pretenses that the events of 1692 began.

In 1689, Reverence Samuel Parris arrived in Salem. In October of 1691, villagers of Salem stopped paying his salary in an attempt to drive him out ("Chronology..."). In the previous sixteen years three other ministers had been driven from Salem under similar circumstances (Ray). The town had a history of rejecting ministers, which some scholars have conjectured fueled Parris and his supporters to create the hysteria in Salem.

It is useful to note that Cotton Mather published a book in 1689 that detailed an occurrence of witchcraft and accusation (Ray). In 1688, Goody Glover had been accused and hanged for witchcraft. The children of the Goodwin household had begun exhibiting bizarre behavior and had accused Glover of bewitching them ("Chronology..."). Apparently, Glover had had an argument with one of the elder Goodwin children prior to their behavior and accusations. That similar behavior and accusations would occur in Salem has led some historians to wonder if the events were related in some way.

In January of 1692, Elizabeth Parris, daughter of Samuel, and her cousin Abigail Williams began exhibiting peculiar behavior that resembled that of the Goodwin children ("Chronology..."). Soon after, many other girls, who came from prominent families that supported Parris, began behaving similarly. A doctor was called, and he determined the girls were suffering from witchcraft. Under questioning, the girls identified Tituba, Samuel Parris' Indian servant, as well as Sarah Good and Sarah Osborne ("Chronology..."). These actions constituted the beginning of the Salem Witch Trials.

Throughout the spring and summer of 1692, accusations, interrogations, and examinations were conducted with the intent of finding witches. One investigator, and later judge, was John Hathorne. Hathorne was Nathaniel Hawthorne's great-great-grandfather. And although no evidence proves that John Hathorne ordered any executions, he committed roughly one hundred women and witnessed a minimum of eighteen executions (Gale 215).

In the courts themselves, spectral evidence and identifying marks were used as evidence. A "witch's teat," which was often a wart, scar, or other skin disfiguration, was often used as confirmation (Johnson 121). Spectral evidence, on the other hand, constituted testaments of witches' spirits causing evil or their magic wreaking havoc (Johnson 121). With flimsy proof such as this, the courts speedily convicted witches so that they might be more quickly removed from Puritan Society.

Despite such judiciary charades, public objection did not begin to surface until prominent figures, such as a former Salem minister, were accused. Still, it was not until October that Governor William Phipps prohibited further arrests ("Chronology..."). Moreover, the process of releasing and pardoning the over one hundred accused lasted into 1693. Afterwards, various people involved in the trials began expressing guilt and showing remorse as time passed, but sources say John Hathorne was never remorseful (Johnson 120).

Even a brief history of the Salem Witch Trials illustrates how mass hysteria and unjust persecution played roles in the events of 1692. For the Hawthorne's Custom House to be located in Salem, this tragic event is evoked. Already standing as a symbol

of persecution, Salem's presence in "The Custom House" reinforces the notion of a town's association with overzealous persecution.

In The Scarlet Letter, persecution and witchcraft play prominent roles. Hester shows characteristics associated with witches. She is a strong and defiant woman. She is also treated as an outsider by the townspeople. However, unlike a true witch, Hester is not in league with the devil. Other than her instance of adultery, Hester proves a righteousness person. Still, there are two characters, Mistress Hibbins and Roger Chillingworth, associated with witches who do practice evil.

Mistress Hibbins is a known witch in Boston. At one point, she attempts to lure Hester into signing the Black Man's book located in the forest. In the text, it is revealed that she will be executed for witchcraft a number of years after the novel's actions have transpired. Mistress Hibbins is the only character in the novel expressly named to be a witch.

Nevertheless, Chillingworth too is associated with witches, because he, like a witch, does the devil's work. He plays an important role in relating the events of Salem to the events in The Scarlet Letter through role reversal. In Salem, the accusers were initially seen as heroes attempting to purge the world of evil. However, as time passed, it became obvious the accusers were the villains. The townspeople had tried and executed many innocent citizens. They had been viewed as the righteous, but they became the wicked.

Like the people of Salem, Chillingworth exhibits role reversal, but he shows it on two levels, personally and communally. On a personal level, in the eyes of the townspeople, Chillingworth's image and role change drastically. Upon first moving into

Dimmesdale's home, the townspeople "were inclined to see a providential hand in Roger Chillingworth's so opportune arrival." (p. 84). They believed his skills and knowledge would help save their ailing minister. Yet, as the novel progresses, the people see him change drastically. They come to believe he is no longer attempting to heal Dimmesdale. He is now viewed as an agent of the devil, tormenting their pious, young minister.

Chillingworth's role reversal is not merely personal though. It comes to represent the location of evil in the community. Originally, the townspeople see evil as being part of the forest's venue. It is the place where Mistress Hibbins meets for her evil rituals. The woods are wild and savage, not civilized like a town. However, as Chillingworth begins his transformation from revered physician to agent of evil, the townspeople wonder if the devil, in the guise of Chillingworth, has taken up residence in their town. That the perceived location of the devil moves, from the forest to the town, is significant. The devil is no longer outside the people's realm. He now lives among them, with them. As the people of Salem had seen the devil in others, outside of themselves, so too did the people of Boston. But, as the people of Salem came to realize the devil was part of them, amongst them, as represented by Chillingworth, so too did the people of Boston.

What makes Salem further important is its connection to Hawthorne's relative, John Hathorne. Since Nathaniel Hawthorne's ancestor was part of the mass hysteria of Salem, it relates him personally with the town. Already at odds with his Puritan heritage, Hawthorne would be distraught to learn of his relative's role in the madness of Salem. John Hathorne served as a persecutor of innocent people in Salem. Because of this, Hawthorne identifies with victims in writing The Scarlet Letter, as he relates the story of

sufferers. Granted, Hester has done wrong. Nonetheless, she atones for her sins, something Hawthorne's relative apparently never did.

The actions of another Hathorne, William, serve onomastic purpose for Nathaniel also, as Hester Prynne takes her name partly from history. As Charles Boewe and Murray G. Murphey point out in the records of the Salem Quarterly Court in November of 1668:

> Hester Craford, for fornication with John Wedg, as she confessed, was ordered to be severely whipped and that security be given to save the town from the charge of keeping the child. Mordecaie Craford [her father] bound. The judgment of her being whipped was respitted for a month or six weeks after the birth of the child, and it was left to the Worshipful Major William Hathorne to see it executed on a lecture day. (p.206).

This passage mentions a woman named Hester, persecuted for a sexual offense by a man named Hathorne. Though this historical Hester's last name is not Prynne, she apparently does have a child, is named Hester, does commit a sexual offense, and is punished. Because Major William Hathorne, one of Hawthorne's ancestors, persecutes her, it seems likely that her name serves as a possible basis for The Scarlet Letter's Hester. Also, in reference to the Biblical section of this work that deals with Hester, it proves interesting that this woman's father is named Mordecaie.

Four other characters in The Scarlet Letter, Governor Winthrop, Governor Bellingham, Reverend Wilson, and Mistress Hibbins, serve important onomastic purposes. Although they play minimal roles in the story and do little to personally advance the plot, they are meaningful. They hold important positions and serve to place the story in history.

Governor John Winthrop's presence in the novel serves primarily to date the novel. Winthrop was the first Governor of Massachusetts and held office from 1630-34,

1637-40, 1642-44, and 1646-49 (Gale 532). Hawthorne places his death in early May, but his death actually occurred on March 26, 1649 (Gerber 22). Charles Ryskamp points out Hawthorne's probable reasons for altering the Governor's time of death. He believes that Dimmesdale could not have had a night vigil during a cold, Boston March (Gerber 22). As one should recall, Dimmesdale's vigil occurred on the night of Winthrop's death.

Also, Ryskamp believes that Hawthorne's plot structure, which was concise and orchestrated, called for the night of Dimmesdale's vigil to be placed within a few weeks of Dimmesdale's confession, which took place on Election Day (Gerber 22). Election Day in Boston typically took place in late May or early June. Therefore, if Winthrop's death was in early May and Election Day took place a few weeks later, it stands to reason Dimmesdale' scaffold scene took place in late May or early June. Though, Governor Winthrop's role in The Scarlet Letter is very minimal, but his presence serves to date the novel's theoretical timeline.

Governor Richard Bellingham is another character whose name is taken from history. He serves as a symbol of authority. It is he who makes an attempt to have Pearl taken from Hester to be better cared for. The real Bellingham came to Boston in 1634 and served as Governor of Massachusetts in 1641, 1654, and from 1665-72 (Gale 31).

As stated, Governor Winthrop's death took place in 1649. When Dimmesdale climbs the scaffold in the final chapter of the novel, it is said Hester had stood in the same place with Pearl seven years earlier. That would place Hester's public appearance on the scaffold in June of 1642. Hawthorne names Bellingham as Governor at that time. However, in June of 1642, John Winthrop was governor, not Richard Bellingham (Gerber 23). Bellingham would have been out of office one month earlier.

Once again, Hawthorne's historical accuracy is flawed. However, as before, there is purpose. Ryskamp suggests that Hawthorne did this to keep "the plot from becoming encumbered with too many minor characters." (Gerber 29). Basically, Hawthorne chose him to be Governor at the novel's opening so John Winthrop would not be developed as a character. Though Bellingham is developed as a character his role remains minor, but still important.

Another historical figure Hawthorne employs is Mistress Anne Hibbins. In the novel, she is Bellingham's sister and a witch. She is also said to be living with her brother. Mistress Hibbins serves as a temptress and symbol of evil. She represents what a truly sinful woman is. Because of this, she serves as a foil of sorts for Hester. It is said that she is executed for witchcraft sometime after the events of The Scarlet Letter are concluded.

Historically, there was a woman named Anne Hibbins who was executed for witchcraft. She was executed in the June of 1656 (Gerber 29). However, her historical relation to Bellingham is not clear-cut. Charles Ryskamp states that there is only one source, in a footnote by James Savage in the 1825 edition of John Winthrop's *History of New England*, equating Bellingham and Hibbins as siblings (29). It is likely that Hawthorne used this source.

Yet, there is still one problem that arises in comparisons between the real Anne Hibbins and the fictional one. The historical Anne Hibbins' husband died on July 23, 1654 (Gerber 28). In The Scarlet Letter, Hawthorne places Mistress Hibbins as living with her brother, Governor Bellingham, while her husband was still alive. Hawthorne could have done this to not add another character, such as Mr. Hibbins. However,

another reason possesses additional logic. He most likely does this to have "fewer stage directions and explanations" (Gerber 29). Still, it could be to show evil's infectious nature on any household or person. Whatever the case, Mistress Hibbins serves as a small but important character in The Scarlet Letter.

One final character whose name has historical implications is Reverend John Wilson. He is a colleague of Arthur Dimmesdale and serves as a symbol of spiritual authority in the novel. In the text, he is an elder man and is described as being good with children. He is presented as a kind and gentle grandfather-like figure.

According to Cotton Mather, and others, Wilson was compassionate, modest, devout, and liked by everyone (Gerber 29-30). Also, footnotes in the Norton Critical Edition of The Scarlet Letter state he was Anne Hutchinson's chief religious rival. Compared with other historically based characters of the novel, John Wilson draws only minimally from actual events. However, his presence in the novel adds to the historicity that Hawthorne creates, in the same manner as other historically based characters do.

Chapter II: Biblical Parallels

The second way in which Hawthorne uses onomastics is biblical. By using biblical references in names, Hawthorne gives the story a moral tone and authoritative feel. He is also able to make the reader connect more readily with characters and their plights, due primarily to the fact that Hawthorne's audience was principally Christian. Hawthorne's use of biblical references serves to correspondingly and conversely define characters.

Hawthorne's most obvious use of biblical reference in shaping characters is through Hester Prynne's child, Pearl. "But she named the infant 'Pearl,' as being of great price, — purchased with all she had, – her mother's only treasure!" (p. 62). Hawthorne took this notion from a passage in the Bible that reads, "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it." (Matthew 13:45-46).

This Biblical passage can be looked at in two different ways, depending upon the interpretation. One interpretation views the reader as the merchant. In this case, the reader must sacrifice in order to obtain the pearl, or salvation. Another interpretation holds that Jesus Christ is the merchant, and the pearl of great price is the Christian religion, a representation of salvation. In this case, Jesus gave all he had so that he could create the true religion, Christianity. Both interpretations are legitimate. Yet, whichever way the parable is viewed, the merchant gave all he had to obtain the pearl.

Having an illicit affair and giving birth to Pearl in a Puritan society cost Hester all she possessed. Hester no longer had the good name and place she once occupied in

Boston. However, like the merchant, Hester now has her Pearl of great price, and ultimately her Pearl leads to her deliverance. Just as a Christian must sacrifice to gain salvation, Hester sacrifices her life and place in society but gains her eventual salvation. And, as Jesus sacrificed to create salvation, Hester sacrifices her life and, in doing so, creates her salvation. In sum, Pearl cost her mother everything but led to her salvation, whichever interpretation of the parable is used.

Another reference to the pearl of great price exists in the novel. "'Pearl,' said he, with great solemnity, 'thou must take heed to instruction, that so, in due season, thou mayest wear in thy bosom the pearl of great price...'" (p. 77). In this reference to the pearl of great price, both interpretations prove useful again, though not as potent as Hawthorne's first example.

If one uses the interpretation of reader as merchant, the speaker, Mr. John Wilson, is talking of believing in Jesus. In this case, the pearl represents the salvation, Jesus, Pearl must take to heart. If one uses the interpretation of Jesus as merchant, Mr. Wilson is talking of believing in the church, which is the pearl. As with the passage that explains Pearl's name, both interpretations are justifiable, and both fit the plot.

Although no further references to the pearl of great price exist in The Scarlet Letter, another reference to pearls is found in the book of Matthew. Matthew 7:6 reads, "'Do not give dogs what is holy; and do not throw your pearls before swine, lest they trample them underfoot and turn to attack you.'" This passage proves interesting as it applies to the text because of what occurs in the chapter titled "The Elf-child and the Minister." In brief summation, the chapter involves Hester meeting with Governor Bellingham, Reverend Wilson, Arthur Dimmesdale, and Roger Chillingworth. During

their talk, it is proposed that Pearl be taken from Hester in order to be raised properly. Hester, in dismay, pleads with Dimmesdale who eloquently intercedes on her behalf.

This biblical passage becomes important in shaping and understanding the story, because, as even a cursory reading of The Scarlet Letter will reveal, Hawthorne's view of Puritans is far from the view they have of themselves. Whereas the Puritans view themselves as holy and righteous people, Hawthorne sees them as overzealous and misguided. If one looks at this passage in Matthew, Pearl would, of course, represent the pearls mentioned in the passage. Also, as applied to "The Elf-child and the Minister," this passage would paint the Puritans as the swine, which proves noteworthy. Perhaps in reading this passage, Hester is, as occurs in the chapter, not supposed to give up Pearl, because, if she did, the Puritans would "trample" her. Considering Hawthorne's view of the Puritans, it is not unreasonable to believe that he would describe them in uncomplimentary terms. Furthermore, one could conjecture that, had Hester given up Pearl, her persecution at the Puritans' hands might have been harsher, as the swine will turn to attack the thrower of the pearls.

Some critics would write off Matthew 7:6 as random occurrence. Yet, if one looks at the passages directly preceding and following Matthew 7:6, the story of The Scarlet Letter is further richened. According to Matthew (7:1-5),

> Judge not, that you be not judged. For with judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and the measure you give will be the measure you get. Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when there is the log in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.

Additionally, Matthew (7:7-8) reads, "Ask, and it will be given you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened." These passages in Matthew encompass the passage pertaining to pearls and swine.

In reading Matthew 7:1-5, one can imply Hawthorne was speaking of the Puritans' judgment of Hester's adultery, which, considering the shortcomings he viewed them as possessing, seems legitimate. This passage in Matthew speaks of hypocrisy, and Hawthorne viewed the Puritans as such, because they judged while having great problems of their own. However, more fittingly, it again calls to mind "The Elf-child and the Minister," in that Governor Bellingham and other Puritans believed that Pearl could be raised better by someone other than Hester. Yet, Governor Bellingham's own sister, Mistress Hibbins, who lives under his own roof, is not a good Puritan but is, in fact, a witch. This points to their hypocrisy as well.

Further, in reading Matthew 7:7-8, one can see how the chapter "The Elf-child and the Minister" still fits the comparisons. This Biblical passage speaks of asking, seeking, and knocking. In all cases, what is sought after is found. Hester, upon hearing Bellingham's proposal to take Pearl, pleads with Dimmesdale to change the governor's mind. Dimmesdale's subsequent speech convinces Bellingham, and Hester's plea is granted. So, in reading Matthew (7:1-8), "The Elf-child and the Minister" gains greater significance.

Pearl is hardly the only character whose name relates to the Bible. Her mother's name, Hester Prynne, draws, not only from history, but also derives meaning from the Bible. Examining the Book of Esther and relating it to Hester Prynne further elucidates

The Scarlet Letter's characters and story. Yet, some may not be familiar with the Book of Esther. Therefore, summary is needed.

The Book of Esther takes place in the realm of King Ahasu-e'rus. One day, Ahasu-e'rus sends his eunuchs to summon Queen Vashti. Vashti refuses the king's summons and is summarily removed from her position as Queen. The king then has his servants gather all the beautiful virgins in his lands and has them put in his harem. Esther, niece of Mordecai, was one of these virgins. King Ahasu-e'rus found Esther more enchanting than all the other virgins and made her Queen Esther, but he did not know she was a Jew, for Mordecai told her not to reveal that fact .

After these events, Ahasu-e'rus appointed Haman as the highest ruler in the kingdom other than himself. All the king's servants would bow before Haman, but Mordecai, who sat outside the king's gates, would not because he was a Jew. Haman was infuriated by Mordecai's actions. So, he spoke with the king and told him of a people in his lands that would not obey his laws. Haman asked to get Ahasu-e'rus to issue a decree that these people be destroyed. And, the decree was issued.

Upon hearing the decree, Mordecai went into mourning. Esther, through the help of one of the king's eunuchs, relayed messages with Mordecai and became aware of the decree. However, if anyone went before the king without being summoned, they would be put to death, except for the one to whom the king held out the golden scepter. Esther called for a three-day, three-night fast among the local Jewry before she approached King Ahasu-e'rus.

Esther approached the king on the third day, and he held the scepter out to her. Esther requested Ahasu-e'rus and Haman's presence at a dinner. The two men came, and

Ahasu-e'rus asked what Esther's request was. Esther asked the two men to come to dinner the following day, at which time she would make her request to the king.

After the dinner, Haman witnessed Mordecai at the king's gate and became enraged. He ordered a large gallows built for Mordecai to hang from the next day. That night, King Ahasu-e'rus could not sleep and had the "book of memorable deeds" brought to him. In reading the book, he found that Mordecai had warned of and, therefore, thwarted an assassination attempt on the king's life. So, King Ahasu-e'rus honored Mordecai with a royal procession.

The next day at Esther's dinner, the king again asked what her appeal was. Esther, then, pleaded for her peoples' lives, as well as her own. When the king asked who would dare kill her and her people, she revealed that it was Haman. Haman was hanged on the gallows he had prepared for Mordecai, and Mordecai gained great favor with the king. The Jews, after fighting off enemies, were saved, and the Jewish holiday of Purim was born.

The Book of Esther and The Scarlet Letter show many similarities in plot and several parallels between characters. One might say these similarities are arbitrary. However, there are two "smoking guns" that make these similarities more than capricious. The first is that Esther and Hester are very similar names. They consist of the same letters, the only difference being the position of the "H" in their names.

The second, more significant, sign that Hawthorne meant the Book of Esther to play part in his thematic structure occurs in Esther 1:6. It reads, "There were white cotton curtains, and blue hangings caught up with cords of fine linen and purple to silver rings and marble pillars, and also couches of gold and silver on a mosaic pavement of

porphyry, marble, mother-of-pearl and precious stones." The phrase "mother-of-pearl" serves as a significant point in relating the Book of Esther and The Scarlet Letter. Although the phrase is arbitrary in the Book of Esther, it is noteworthy as it applies to Hawthorne's work, because Hester is the mother of Pearl. This phrase, coupled with the similarity that exists in the two heroines names, connects the two works.

Still, the aforementioned similarities are only the beginning. Likenesses exist between characters in the two stories. Arthur Dimmesdale resembles King Ahasu-e'rus, while Roger Chillingworth bears resemblance to Haman. Moreover, Hester Prynne parallels Esther, while Mordecai and Pearl show similarity. The characters share comparable qualities and similar fates that lead to greater appreciation for The Scarlet Letter.

Arthur Dimmesdale is reminiscent of King Ahasu-e'rus for several reasons. Evil men advise both characters. Chillingworth advises Dimmesdale, while Haman advises Ahasu-e'rus. Additionally, both men are somewhat naïve. Neither Dimmesdale nor Ahasu-e'rus are aware of the nature of their devious advisors. They are only made aware of their counselors' insidious natures when their respective heroines, Hester and Esther, enlighten them. Both also hold significant positions in their realm. Dimmesdale is a prominent minister in Puritan Boston, while Ahasu-e'rus is sovereign in his kingdom.

Besides Dimmesdale and Ahasu-e'rus' similarities, there are likenesses between Roger Chillingworth and Haman. Both, as mentioned, play the role of advisor to prominent figures, and both possess wicked personalities and cruel intentions. Chillingworth torments the unknowing Dimmesdale. Correspondingly, Haman seeks to

destroy the Jews. Both men also hold prestigious positions in society. Chillingworth is a learned physician, while only King Ahasu-e'rus outranks Haman in his dominion.

Chillingworth and Haman's resemblances do not end there though. Both men become victims of their own evil purposes. Chillingworth meets his end some time after Dimmesdale, accompanied by Hester and Pearl, ascends the scaffold and confesses his sin. Once this has happened, "...he positively withered up, shriveled away, and almost vanished from mortal sight... This unhappy man had made the very principle of his life to consist in the pursuit and systematic exercise of revenge; and when... there was no more devil's work on earth for him to do, it only remained for the unhumanized mortal to betake himself..." (p. 175). In short, Chillingworth became a victim of his own vice. Haman meets his end in a similar fashion. Upon learning of Haman's evil plan from Esther, King Ahasu-e'rus has him hanged on the same gallows he had created to kill Mordecai. So, like Chillingworth, Haman meets doom through his own creation.

Another similarity exists in the two villains' deaths. Upon Chillingworth's death, "... he bequeathed a very considerable amount of property, both here and in England, to little Pearl, the daughter of Hester Prynne. So Pearl... became the richest heiress of her day, in the New World." (p.176). Hence, the death of the villain, Chillingworth, profits Pearl. Similarly, upon Haman's death, "... the king took off his signet ring, which he had taken from Haman, and gave it to Mordecai. And Esther set Mordecai over the house of Haman." (Esther 8:2). Therefore, the death of the villain again benefits someone, in this case Mordecai. In both stories, the death of the evil advisor results in monetary and proprietal gains for key figures.

The most significant parallels, though, exist between Hester Prynne and Esther. As stated before, both heroines are involved with prestigious men, Dimmesdale and Ahasu-e'rus, and aid these men in bringing about the downfall of the stories' respective villains. Yet, their connections run deeper. Both are presented as strong female characters in patriarchal societies. Hester lives in Puritan Boston in the 1640's. Esther lives in Biblical times, before the birth of Christ. Both also face consequences for their actions. Hester wears the red "A" in atonement for her adultery, while Esther faces death if she does not receive Ahasu-e'rus' favor, as represented by the golden scepter. But, the two heroines overcome these challenges, Hester through her perseverance and the presence of Pearl and Esther through the favor of Ahasu-e'rus and grace of God.

Lastly, the characters' actions make them great icons for their people. Hester's actions lead the people of Boston into gradually changing their view of her, as represented by the changing meaning of the scarlet letter. When Hester first wears the red letter "A," it symbolized her adultery and disgrace. However, as the novel progresses, the letter comes to achieve other meanings. Many townspeople eventually:

> ...refused to interpret the scarlet A by its original significance. They said it meant Able; so strong was Hester Prynne, with a woman's strength... Individuals in private life, meanwhile, had quite forgiven Hester Prynne for her frailty; nay, more, they had begun to look upon the scarlet letter as the token, not of that one sin, for which she had borne so long and dreary a penance, but of her many good deeds since. (p. 110-11).

At the conclusion of The Scarlet Letter, the "A" take on still different meaning. Bostonian women would come to Hester with "all their sorrows and perplexities." During this time, Hester kept faith that a woman would appear as, "... The angel and apostle of the coming revelation... So said Hester Prynne, and glanced her sad eyes downward at the scarlet letter." (p. 177-78). Though Hester does not seem to believe she

could be this person, she has become an angel to the people of Boston for all the good deeds she has done since her tragic sin.

Esther, like Hester, also becomes a symbol of her people. After the events in the Book of Esther, the Jewish holiday of Purim is created. In the Book of Esther (9:27-28),

> the Jews ordained and took it upon themselves and their descendants and all who joined them, that without fail they would keep these two days according to what was written and at the time appointed every year, that these days should be remembered and kept throughout every generation, in every family, province, and city, and that these days of Purim should never fall into disuse among the Jews, nor should the commemoration of these days cease among their descendants.

Therefore, since Jews celebrate the holiday of Purim to commemorate the events that took place in the Book of Esther, Esther is a hero to the Jewish people. So, both women become great in the eyes of their people. By understanding the character of Esther, Hester Prynne's plight and position become more richly understood.

Still, one final parallel exists between characters in the Book of Esther and The Scarlet Letter. Pearl and Mordecai, though not as similar as other corresponding characters, serve similar roles in advancing the plots of their stories. As mentioned before, both Pearl and Mordecai receive rewards from villains. Pearl gained her fortune from Chillingworth's last will and testament. Mordecai received Haman's house and position upon Haman's execution.

Other ways also exist in which the two characters resemble one and other. Both Pearl and Mordecai's presence is essential to their stories. If Pearl had not been born, the Puritans of Boston would not have known of Hester's illicit affair. In the same manner, if Mordecai had not been outside the king's gates and refused to bow to Haman, no order to

kill the Jews would have been issued. Therefore, the presence of both characters serves to create the inciting incidents of the stories.

The two characters are also closely associated with insight. Pearl is part of many instances of insight, although, being a child, she is not truly aware of them. Even before Dimmesdale is revealed as Pearl's father, Pearl's actions speak loudly. In the chapter "The Recognition," the infant Pearl responds to Dimmesdale by directing her, "hitherto vacant gaze towards Mr. Dimmesdale, and held up (her) little arms, with a half pleased, half plaintive murmur." (p. 49). Although the chapter's name is normally taken to symbolize the recognition between Hester and Chillingworth, it also refers to Pearl's small, but revealing, action in which she seems to instinctually recognize Dimmesdale. Another example occurs in the chapter "Hester and Pearl." In this chapter, Hester asks Pearl if she knows what the "A" she wears stands for. Pearl answers that Hester wears it for the same reason the minister keeps his hand over his heart. Pearl, through other events, does not really seem to know the meaning of the letter, but her answer speaks loudly.

Mordecai also serves as a creature of insight. He discovers the two eunuchs' plot to kill Ahasu-e'rus and sends warning. Also, Mordecai is the one who, through a eunuch's aid, tells Esther of the decree calling for the destruction of the Jews. Although it was common knowledge around the empire, Esther was unaware until receiving Mordecai's message. Although Pearl and Mordecai are the least similar characters of the four corresponding pairs, they serve similar roles in advancing their stories plots.

An additional name carrying biblical significance in The Scarlet Letter exists. The town of Salem, whose historical implications were discussed before, also has biblical

connotations that apply to the text. By looking at the biblical implications, Salem's importance becomes clearer, while its historical onomastic structure also becomes expanded.

The town of Salem is mentioned many times in "The Custom House." It is Hawthorne's hometown, though he says he has spent much time away from it. Salem appears in the Bible in both the Old and New Testament. In Genesis (14:18), Abram, later to be named Abraham, meets Mel-chiz'edek. "And Mel-chiz'edek, king of Salem, brought out bread and wine; he was priest of God Most High." Salem is also spoken of in Hebrews. "For this Mel-chiz'edek, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him; and to him Abraham apportioned a tenth of everything. He is first, by translation of his name, king of righteousness, and then he is also king of Salem, that is king of peace." (Hebrews 7:1-2).

Then, biblically, Salem is important because of its relationship to the covenant. In Mosaic Law, priests were chosen from among Levi's descendents and could not become kings. Yet, Hebrews (7:17) reads, "For it is witnessed of him, 'Thou art a priest for ever, after the order of Mel-chiz'edek.'" This states that one person, Jesus, will now hold the role of king and priest, as it was with Mel-chiz'edek. There is also another interesting item linking Jesus and Mel-chiz'edek. Not only was Mel-chiz'edek both king and priest, he also brought Abram bread and wine. Jesus, the new king and priest, is strongly associated with bread and wine through the last supper.

"To name a town 'Salem' would amount to giving glory to God on account of Melchizedek and Jesus, and would acknowledge that the townspeople were attempting to follow God." (Watson 7). However, by looking more closely at "The Custom House"

and knowing Hawthorne's critical attitude of the Puritans, one will find that Hawthorne disputes the town's "holy" nature.

By examining the Collector and the Inspector of "The Custom House," one can discover Hawthorne's disputation of Salem's righteousness. The Collector is described as, "... attaching himself strongly to familiar faces, and with difficulty moved to change, even when change might have brought unquestionable improvement." (p. 11). Additionally, "... it must, at any period of his life, have required an impulse to set him in motion..." (p. 17). The Collector is conservative and set in his ways. The Inspector is described differently though. "My conclusion was that he had no soul, no heart, no mind; nothing, as I have already said, but instincts..." (p. 15). Hawthorne even relates him to "four-footed brethren." Essentially, the Inspector is an animal.

Taking the descriptions of the Collector and Inspector, one can apply the notions derived from biblical connotations of Salem's name and the order of Mel-chiz'edek. Mel-chiz'edek served the roles of both king and priest to Salem. In order to be king, one must be a good leader. To be a good leader, change and compromise are critical to success. The Collector, then, proves to be a superb foil to the role of king, since he lacks the ability to change. Also, in order to be a good priest, one must be moral and intelligent. The Inspector, having been compared to animals and lacking soul, heart, and mind, proves a good foil to the role of priest. So, Hawthorne uses these characters to dispute the roles Mel-chiz'edek had and, in doing so, disputes Salem, Massachusetts' claim to righteousness.

As one can see, Hawthorne uses biblical motifs to shape the names used in The Scarlet Letter. Through examining passages in Matthew, Genesis, Hebrews, and the

Book of Esther and applying them to the text, a greater recognition and appreciation of Hawthorne's onomastic structure can be gained.

Chapter III: The Arthurian Structure

The third onomastic device Hawthorne uses to shape his novel is that of Arthurian legend. By utilizing Arthurian legend, Hawthorne is able to give greater insight into characters' relationships and, ultimately, into the character of Arthur Dimmesdale. It is much less obvious and abundant than the previous two applications of historical and biblical structuring but no less intriguing. Parallels to Arthurian legend reveal multiple meanings that contribute to the novel's design.

Arthurian legend lends itself to The Scarlet Letter through key relationships experienced by the characters King Arthur and Arthur Dimmesdale. Both characters develop a relationship with an advisor, Merlin and Roger Chillingworth respectively. Both also develop a relationship with a woman, King Arthur with Morgan and Arthur Dimmesdale with Hester Prynne. Although the particular relationships may differ on the surface, King Arthur and Arthur Dimmesdale's corresponding relationships affect them in very similar fashion.

The first such similarity exists in the relationship of King Arthur to Merlin and Reverend Arthur Dimmesdale to Roger Chillingworth. In Arthurian legend, Merlin plays the roles of magician, advisor, and manipulator, while in The Scarlet Letter, Roger Chillingworth plays the roles of alchemist, doctor, advisor, and manipulator. One can induce parallels between Merlin and Chillingworth because of their similar relationships to knowledge, mystery, and magic.

Merlin is a wizard. In ancient legends, wizards were viewed as mysterious, magical, and as extraordinarily intelligent beings. Merlin not only fits the description; he

practically defines it. Merlin is of unknown but widely speculated origin. He also possesses great magical power and knowledge of many subjects. Chillingworth, on the other hand, is a doctor and alchemist. His qualifications as doctor connote intelligence. Furthermore, his status as alchemist implies mystery and magic, as well as pursuit of knowledge. He has also learned healing arts from the American Indians, which were seen as mysterious and even dangerous to the people of Boston. Lastly, Chillingworth is of unknown origins, at least to the inhabitants of Boston. By studying more deeply Arthurian legend and, then, comparing it to The Scarlet Letter, one can see that, through positions as advisors, Merlin and Chillingworth manipulate each Arthur to their respective triumphs.

Merlin's relationship to King Arthur began with Arthur's father, Uther. Merlin aided Uther in ascending to the throne of England, but Uther was a passionate man. He lusted after Ygraine, wife to the Duke of Gorlois. Uther wished Merlin to grant him one night with Ygraine. Merlin agreed, but only if he received the product of their union. Uther agreed to this requirement and was disguised by Merlin's magic. Uther then entered the Duke's estate; and, disguised as the Duke, he made love to Ygraine. Arthur was the product of their union, and upon his birth, Merlin took him away. Uther was later killed, leaving the throne vacant. Merlin did not raise Arthur but served as his friend and advisor throughout his life, which included his rise to the throne and construction of Camelot. The utopian Camelot represented both Merlin and Arthur's ideals of rational judgement and was a stable kingdom.

Merlin's manipulation of Arthur, though, seems especially evident in his role at the Round Table. Merlin advised and aided in its construction before Arthur ascended to

the throne. There was always one empty seat at the Round Table called the Perilous Seat. This seat was not to be used, for it was meant for a chosen knight; sitting in it would end in death. King Arthur was the chosen knight who eventually occupied the seat. This leads to the conclusion that Merlin had intentions for the future rule of Arthur and was not simply an advisor. He was not only Arthur's boyhood tutor; he also arranged for the sword-in-the-stone contest, which led to Arthur's kingship, and convinced the Lady of the Lake to grant Arthur Excalibur. Through positive manipulation and advice, Merlin guided Arthur to his triumph and purpose.

Roger Chillingworth, though, controls Arthur Dimmesdale in a different and more insidious manner. Chillingworth, the estranged husband of Hester Prynne, sought to discover the father of Pearl and later deduced that Dimmesdale was the person responsible. He began to live with Dimmesdale as an advisor and physician. It was thought Dimmesdale was in deteriorating health and was in need of a skilled physician, such as Chillingworth. In reality, Chillingworth slowly and methodically attempted to mentally ravage Dimmesdale. Ironically, Chillingworth's evil intentions and actions helped lead to the redemption and triumph of Dimmesdale at the close of the novel. Dimmesdale, tortured by self-loathing, Chillingworth's torment, and the weight of his sin, confesses his sin and dies shortly thereafter, triumphant. Therefore, Chillingworth and Dimmesdale's relationship is parallel to Merlin's guidance of Arthur towards Camelot.

Another parallel can be drawn between The Scarlet Letter and Arthurian legend using both Arthurs and their respective relationships to a woman. In the case of King Arthur, the woman was his half-sister, Morgan (or some variation). She was the daughter

of Ygraine and the Duke of Gorlois. Morgan was extremely resentful of Arthur's power, success, and glory. So, she used magic to disguise herself as a beautiful woman. Arthur was enchanted by the beautiful woman and allowed his passion to overtake him. Arthur, to his dismay, later discovered her true identity but could do nothing about it. Morgan became pregnant with Arthur's child. Upon the his birth, the child was named Mordred and was raised by Morgan with the purpose of becoming Arthur's bane. Sometime after Mordred reached adulthood, he and King Arthur battled one and other, resulting in the death of both combatants. However, Arthur's passion did not obliterate his ultimate fate, even if it destroyed his rule. The legend continued with the prophecy that Arthur was somehow saved and is, even now, asleep, waiting to defend his isle in its time of need. Arthur's definitive achievement may have been Camelot, but his ultimate fate was to sleep until his land becomes threatened by grave danger. Arthur's reign ended, but he gained greater glory by becoming the legendary hero and defender of his isle.

King Arthur's relationship to Morgan, then, parallels Arthur Dimmesdale's relationship to Hester Prynne. Dimmesdale also allowed his passion to take hold of him and, in doing so, committed the sin of adultery with Hester, resulting in the birth of their daughter, Pearl. Years later, after much torment, Dimmesdale confessed his sin and soon after died. He achieved his fate and ultimate triumph as a consequence of his passion. Dimmesdale lost his life but gained eternal life through confession and forgiveness. Although King Arthur's woman and child, Morgan and Mordred respectively, sought to bring about his downfall, they led him to glory. Whereas, Arthur Dimmesdale's woman and child, Hester and Pearl, sought to aid, not hinder, him in overcoming his err. Both

Dimmesdale and King Arthur's uncontrolled passion for a woman led to the birth of their children, their eventual downfalls and deaths, and their ultimate destinies and rewards.

The relationships that exist between King Arthur and Merlin and King Arthur and Morgan parallel the relationships that exist between Arthur Dimmesdale and Roger Chillingworth and Dimmesdale and Hester. Although the interaction and nature of the characters relating to their respective Arthur may not be the same, the way they affect their Arthur is similar. Although these relationships are the only devices relating to Arthurian legend in The Scarlet Letter, they prove significant because they help to develop and further understand the character and interactions of Arthur Dimmesdale.

Chapter IV: Metaphorical Meanings

The final way onomastics plays a role in shaping Hawthorne's The Scarlet Letter is through metaphorical references in names. These symbolic references provide greater meaning and depth for individual characters, as well as for important events that occur in the novel. They are the least material of the four onomastic aspects but can often be the most obvious. Metaphorical references in names of The Scarlet Letter serve to add depth to an already deep novel.

When observing the surname of Arthur, Dimmesdale, two words can immediately be seen, dim and dale. The first word, dim, suggests the contrasting elements of lightness and darkness. The word dim is an obvious reference to the stage between darkness and light. This is significant because Dimmesdale is constantly described in these terms. Many examples serve to illustrate this point.

One such incident occurs when Hester Prynne visits the Governor's mansion. At first, Dimmesdale is presented inside the mansion, which implies that he is not outside where he would be subject to light. After he speaks on behalf of Hester and Pearl, he is described as standing, "... with his face partially concealed in the heavy folds of the window curtain, while the shadow of his figure, which the sunshine cast upon the floor was tremulous." This sentence begins with Arthur standing enfolded in darkness and ending with him bathed in light. Not only does this sentence show Arthur's progression from darkness to light, but it also uses a key word to relate the two words, shadow. In this case, the word shadow connects dark and light both grammatically and metaphorically in one sentence. Grammatically, shadow appears between references to

dark and light. Metaphorically, it connects the two concepts through their relationship with shadows. A shadow cannot exist without both light and dark. Therefore, there is reference to dimness, which is a stage between light and dark.

Numerous other descriptions exist in the novel that describe Dimmesdale in terms of light and dark. One description reads, "... so imminent was the prospect that his dawning light would be extinguished..." (p. 83) Light and its extinguishment, which would result in darkness, are mentioned here. Another Dimmesdale reference states, "It was as if a window were thrown open, admitting a freer atmosphere into the closed and stifled study, where his life was wasting itself away, amid lamplight, or obstructed day beams..." (p. 85). This time light is implied through reference to an open window. Dark is also implied through mention of the closed study. More significantly though, in a time before the existence of light bulbs and phosphorescent lamps, lamplight would be dim, just as "obstructed day beams" would be. This example describes, as before, the intermediate stage between light and dark.

An additional example reads, "... then, at some inevitable moment, will the soul of the sufferer be dissolved, and flow forth in a dark, but transparent stream, bringing all its mysteries into the daylight." (p. 86). This passage also mentions both light and dark. However, instead of mentioning dimness, this passage focuses upon bright light. This example alludes to the chapter "The Revelation of the Scarlet Letter," because Dimmesdale will die, revealing his secret, in the daylight. One final illustration of this states there was, "... assigned to Mr. Dimmesdale a front apartment, with a sunny exposure, and heavy window-curtains to create a noontide shadow, when desirable." (p. 87). Again, references to light, through sunny exposure, dark, through heavy curtains,

which block light, and dimness, through shadow, are referenced to Dimmesdale, again showing their importance to his character.

The "dale" in Dimmesdale's name also plays an important role in developing his character. It reinforces the important brook-side scene that takes place in the forest outside of Boston. At the dale, an important reconciliation takes place between Hester and Arthur, which Hawthorne symbolizes with light. They meet at noon, but they meet in a forest. This means lightness, darkness, and dimness once again play an important role. The woods are described as "dim," and "shadow" is used in describing the forest as well.

Early in the forest scene, Pearl had been chasing and "catching" rays of sunshine. When Hester attempted to "catch" a ray, it eluded her. Later, while still in the woods, Hester and Dimmesdale reach reconciliation. Once this has happened, they are bathed in sunshine. "All at once, as with a sudden smile of heaven, forth burst the sunshine, pouring a very flood into the obscure forest, gladdening each leaf, transmuting the yellow fallen ones to gold, and gleaming adown the gray trunks of the solemn trees. The objects that had made a shadow hitherto, embodied the brightness now." (p. 138).

The use of light in this section represents two important things for Dimmesdale. The first is seen in correlation to the earlier episode with Hester and Pearl chasing sunlight. Hester, as an individual, could not catch the rays of sunshine. However, Pearl, the representation of Hester and Dimmesdale's sin and redemption, could catch the rays. Once Hester and Dimmesdale have reached reconciliation and are set upon a course of action, they are bathed in the sun's light. The other important aspect for Dimmesdale is that he will later be bathed in light when he ascends the scaffold for the final time and is

redeemed. It will be noon, and he will be described as, "waxing dimmer and brighter, and fading at last into the light of heaven!" (p. 170). So, not only does light play an important role for Dimmesdale, the seen at the dale, using references to light, represents his reconciliation with Hester, which leads him to his redemption.

Another character whose surname has strong symbolic meaning is that of Roger Chillingworth. With Chillingworth also, one can split his name and find two words that have symbolic meaning, "chilling" and "worth." Both serve to define his character, although "chilling" is more integral to his demeanor. By observing the meaning of Roger's surname, his personality is made readily apparent.

"Chilling," as it applies to Chillingworth, implies the sensation of cold, particularly as it relates to fear or lack of feeling altogether. Chillingworth is described in similar terms many times. "...(Chillingworth) felt her pulse, looked into her eyes, – a gaze that made her hear shrink and shudder, because so familiar, and yet so strange and cold..." (p. 52-3). In this example, Hester is chilled by his stare but is also chilled by his lack of emotion.

Moreover, his appearance, which was ugly to begin with and became more deformed through the course of the story, frightens as much as his personality. When he is described early in the novel, he possesses a "strange, penetrating power" that made one feel he could "read the human soul," which would unsettle nearly any person. As the novel progresses, Hester "was startled to perceive what a change had come over his features, – how much uglier they were, – how his dark complexion seemed to have grown duskier, and his figure more misshapen..." (p. 77). However, Chillingworth grows still more frightening. "So, Roger Chillingworth – a deformed old figure, with a face that

haunted men's memories longer than they like – took leave of Hester Prynne, and went stooping away along the earth." (p. 119).

Chillingworth is first introduced as a cold, calculating scholar, a man with little emotion. Yet, as The Scarlet Letter progresses, he develops a strong passion, revenge. As revenge consumes him, his appearance grows more grotesque and frightening. As this happens, the chill associated with him turns from a cold lack of emotion to a chilling feel that frightens people. Therefore, whether his personality is cold or chilling, it fits his character's progression throughout the text.

The second piece of Roger Chillingworth's surname also serves the plot, though not as skillfully as the first. Chillingworth is a physician, scholar, and alchemist. As a physician and scholar, he has value, or worth, for his intelligence, knowledge, and skills. As an alchemist, he seeks gold, which has great market value. For these reasons, Chillingworth is associated with merit and value, or worth.

But, another reason reveals Hawthorne's use of "worth" in Roger's name. At the close of the novel, Chillingworth dies. As discussed earlier, in his last will and testament, he bequeathed a great sum of money and land upon Pearl, and she became the richest heiress of the New World. Therefore, Chillingworth had great wealth, and, wealth, or course, has great monetary worth. So, Chillingworth's name possesses two important words in it.

Still, one other surname accounts for metaphorical onomastics. Hester Prynne's last name contains a word within it that suggests greater meaning. Prynne holds the word "pry" in it. However, it does not apply simply to Hester. Hester is the only person who is explicitly named as Prynne, but the name also applies to two other characters, Pearl

and Roger Chillingworth. Pearl, being the daughter of Hester, and lacking a legitimate and known father, would be given her mother's name, Prynne. Roger Chillingworth takes his fictitious surname to hide his identity, and, from that, one can deduce that his name was, in fact, Roger Prynne before he came to Boston.

Prying plays a large part in developing characters and plot in The Scarlet Letter. Hester is the object of much prying. In the initial scene on the scaffold, Boston's powerful leaders and churchmen attempt to discover the identity of Pearl's father through questioning and public shaming. Bostonians themselves, the "prying multitude," also wish to discover who Pearl's father is.

Yet, most of the meddling Hester is accustomed to comes from two other Prynnes, Pearl and Roger Chillingworth. Chillingworth shows his prying nature from the opening of the novel. When he first sees Hester upon the scaffold, he asks questions such as: "... who is this woman? – and wherefore is she here set up to public shame?", "Will it please you, therefore, to tell me of Hester Prynne's, – have I her name rightly? – of this woman's offences, and what has brought her to yonder scaffold?", and "And who, by your favor, Sir, may be the father of yonder babe – it is some three or four months old, I should judge – which Mistress Prynne is holding in her arms?" (p. 44-5).

Chillingworth does not end there though. When he meets with Hester in the jail, he commands her to name Pearl's father. When she denies him, he says, "But, as for me, I come to inquest with other senses than they possess. I shall seek this man, as I have sought truth in books; as I have sought gold in alchemy." (p. 53-4). When he realizes he cannot discover the father from Hester, he vows to snoop for the father himself.

So, Chillingworth continues to pry, not of Hester, but instead of Dimmesdale. "So Roger Chillingworth – the man of skill, the kind and friendly physician – strove to go deep into his patient's bosom, delving among his principles, prying into his recollections, and probing every thing with a cautious touch, like a treasure-seeker in a dark cavern." (p. 86). His patient is Arthur Dimmesdale, and he is attempting to wrench the pastor's secret from his heart. Since he is also attempting to torment Dimmesdale, Chillingworth is also trying to discover whatever he can so as to more sadistically torture the pastor's soul.

Pearl also pries, though not as methodically and malevolently as Chillingworth. When Hester asks Pearl where she came from, if not from her Heavenly Father as Pearl says, Pearl, in response, chides Hester saying, "Tell me! Tell me!... It is thou that must tell me!" (p. 68). In this instance, along with others, Pearl, in a childish manner, is attempting to have Hester reveal who her father is.

Yet, Pearl attempts to pry other information from Hester as well. "But in good earnest now, mother dear, what does this scarlet letter mean? — and why dost thou wear it on thy bosom? — and why does the minister keep his hand over his heart?" (p.122). Although these are the musings of a small child, they are questions that possess great magnitude and show Pearl's curious nature.

One of these questions involves Dimmesdale, who Pearl also tries to get Hester to speak of. Little Pearl always wonders why the minister keeps his hand over his heart. After the pivotal brook-side encounter of Hester, Dimmesdale, and Pearl, Pearl begins to ask Hester if the minister will stand with them. Hester revokes all of Pearl's inquiries,

but still, Pearl attempts to pry into Hester's mind to gain knowledge about herself, her mother, and others.

It is interesting to note that of all three Prynnes, Hester is the only one explicitly named and the only one who does not attempt to pry herself. She is instead the object of inquest. The other, unnamed Prynnes, Roger Chillingworth and Pearl, are the characters who pry. This serves possibly to illustrate that Hawthorne's main reason for choosing the last name Prynne was primarily to reinforce Hester nature of being pried upon.

One last name that has metaphorical connotations is Salem. As mentioned before, Salem has both historical and biblical significance to its name. However, Salem is also a symbolic play on words. Salem is part of the name Jerusalem, Christianity's holiest city. To name a town Salem would not only have biblical implications, as related to Melchiz'edek, it would also be symbolic of Jerusalem. It would indicate a desire for Salem to be a great and important city as Jerusalem was.

Conclusion

This work has aimed to demonstrate Hawthorne's use of onomastics in The Scarlet Letter. By examining the names of characters and places within the text, one can see the application of an underlying system used in their formation. Hawthorne's selection of names illustrates his meticulous plot and theme construction. In addition, his expansive knowledge of diverse subject material is demonstrated through the use of a variety of sources.

Hawthorne uses historical, biblical, Arthurian, and metaphorical sources to enrich the text and characters of The Scarlet Letter. Historical sources, such as the historical figures of the New World, serve to place the novel in history and to create the illusion of actuality. Sources of biblical origin, such as the Books of Matthew and Esther, give the novel a transcendent moral and emotional value. The use of Arthurian legend, on the other hand, serves to augment the name and experiences of Arthur Dimmesdale. Lastly, metaphorical sources serve as a device for character development, as with Roger Chillingworth.

Hawthorne's onomastic structure in The Scarlet Letter is extensive and powerful. Yet its well-orchestrated structure calls for further research into other works and themes. Texts such as The Odyssey and The Aeneid use characters' names to coordinate and develop their respective plots. Certainly, as one recalls the meaning of Odysseus' name ("willing to give pain"), this hero must inflict pain to undergo a suffering that results in self-understanding. And Virgil does not forego the mythological relationships of Jupiter, Juno, and Venus that are described in the "War in Heaven" and are enacted in Aeneas' founding of Rome. Similarly, in more recent texts, such as Flaubert's Madame Bovary

(1857), the meaning of names resonates throughout and structures the themes of a novel contemporary with Hawthorne's The Scarlet Letter (1852). In dying, Emma reflects the animalistic meaning of her name (bos/bovis or cow) and has been victimized by Rudolph whose name evokes a wolf and by Leon whose name suggests a lion. Hawthorne, then, does not seem to be working in a solitary, creative vacuum. Rather, through his use of these [historical, biblical, Arthurian, and metaphorical] structures, he creates an engaging text that conveys multiple layers of interpretation, and that calls upon future readers to examine a work thematically and artistically complex.

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